Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to House Joint

Resolution 114. This so-called compromise

resolution on Iraq is not compromise

at all, but a blank check to

give President Bush unprecedented

power to launch preemptive war on

Iraq. There is no justification for such

an action, and the case that the administration

has made is suspect at best.

Even though we are engaged in a war

on terrorism, here we are today, no

mention of Osama bin Laden, no mention

of how this resolution accomplishes

the goal we all stood unified on 1 year ago.

Not only has the case not been made

to the American people, we have not

made the case to the international

community, and we cannot go it alone.

We cannot act unilaterally. We must

work closely with the United Nations

and other countries in the global community.

Without them we cannot move

towards a new, more peaceful world.

We need to be mindful that we were

able to act quickly and decisively during

the Gulf War because we stood as a

world community. Today we stand

alone. Is Saddam Hussein evil? Absolutely.

But we have not been shown

that there is an imminent threat compelling

us to act. We know what an imminent

threat looks like. We saw it

during the Cuban Missile Crisis, in the

buildup to the Six-Day War in the Middle

East, and when Iraqi tanks poised

on the border with Kuwait in 1990. By

contrast, the evidence here looks more

like the Gulf of Tonkin.

War is our last resort, not our first

option. The United States must exhaust

all diplomatic channels before

waging another war. The President

needs to work closely with the international

community to demand completely

unfettered inspections of Iraq’s

weapons of mass destruction programs.

With continued pressure from the

world’s only superpower, we can pressure

the Iraqi Government to allow

United Nations inspectors in so we can

know exactly what Saddam Hussein

has in his weapons arsenal before we

act. At this time we do not have such

firm information, only the past record

of the Iraqi regime. If we did have this

information and if this government

consults with, rather than dictates to,

our allies and the international community,

only then could we act against

the threat that Iraq poses.

We do need to act, but we do not need

to rush into war. War is one answer,

but it is not the only answer. Will war

solve the Iraqi problem and wipe out

terrorism in the world as we know it?

Maybe, but probably not. Our actions

may simply spur greater resentment

against our increasingly imperial

power, producing an endless stream of

new enemies finding new and terrifying

ways to attack us.

What we must do at this critical

juncture in our Nation’s history is to

affirm American values of peace, justice,

and democracy. These values are

what brought this country to the preeminent

position as the ‘‘indispensable

Nation,’’ and they are the reason why

we embody the hopes and aspirations of

people around the world. We must not

let them down. We demonstrate our

peaceful intent by pursuing diplomatic

means to pressure the Iraqi regime. We

may pursue justice by seeking an indictment

of Saddam Hussein for war

crimes in the International Criminal

Court, and we must affirm our democratic

values by consulting allies and

working with the United Nations to resolve

this crisis. But the enumeration

of Iraq’s past crimes, concerns over

preemption and our place in the world,

pale when compared to the reality of

sending our young men and women

into harm’s way. We know that some of

them will die.

Before we vote to send them to war,

we must be able to look in the eyes of

the mothers and fathers whose sons

and daughters have died for us and tell

them that their sacrifice was worth it.

I cannot do that today in good conscience,

and that is why I will vote ‘‘no.’’